Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries -- complete applicable sections)

STATE:	
Missouri	
COUNTY:	
Shelby	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:

Bethel Historic District

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Boundaries as shown on annexed map

CITY OR TOWN:

Bethel

STATE		CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Missouri		24	Shelby	205

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY *(Check One)*	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☒ District ☐ Building ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☒ Private ☐ Both Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☒ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☒ Agricultural   ☒ Government   ☐ Park   ☐ Transportation   ☐ Comments
☒ Commercial   ☐ Industrial   ☒ Private Residence   ☐ Other *(Specify)*
☒ Educational   ☐ Military   ☐ Religious
☐ Entertainment   ☐ Museum   ☐ Scientific

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

Multiple private ownership

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE
Bethel	Missouri	24

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Office of Recorder of Deeds, Shelby County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

Route 15

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE
Shelbyville	Missouri	24

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Missouri Historic Sites Catalogue

DATE OF SURVEY: 1963   ☐ Federal   ☒ State   ☐ County   ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

The State Historical Society of Missouri

STREET AND NUMBER:

Corner, Hitt and Lowry Streets

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE
Columbia	Missouri	24

(side margin) STATE: Missouri   COUNTY: Shelby   ENTRY NUMBER   FOR NPS USE ONLY   DATE

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☒ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	☐ Altered	☒ Unaltered		☐ Moved	☒ Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Surrounded by flat, regular terrain, the Bethel Historic District
in Bethel, Missouri is bisected by a main street (Route 15) which
runs in a north-south direction, with two streets parallel to it,
one to the east and one to the west. The town is further divided
by a series of three cross streets running in an east-west direction
parallel to the North River which lies just to the south of the town.
The majority of the buildings are arranged along both sides of the
main street with an east-west orientation. Only the Vandiver House
which was standing when the property was purchased defies this direc-
tional placement.

Architecturally, the structures are remarkably consistent. The
buildings are situated close to the sidewalks to utilize the mini-
mum amount of farmland. They all stand on limestone foundations
and most are constructed of brick made by the colony members and
laid according to the American bond method. Broken bits of brick
also appear in the frame houses as an insulating filler between the
walls. Two story structures with simple ridge roofs are the most
prevalent, as are plain rectangular doors and windows with wood
frames, sills and lintels. The buildings are generally devoid of
ornamentation with the exception of slight decorative brickwork
above each opening.

The interiors are characterized by central halls and large open rooms,
generally two to each floor, with predominantly walnut woodwork and
floor boards.

The list of Bethel Society structures included within this historic
district is as follows:

1. The Vandiver House, a two story brick structure pur-
   chased by the colonists in 1844 from Mr. Vandiver and
   used to house the first colonists during their initial
   winter in Bethel. This structure later held the Bethel
   hat and glove factories in its two upper rooms.

2. The Bair Residence, a two story frame house covered
   with clapboard; In colony times Mr. Bair was the Bethel
   wheelwright.

3. The Bethel School, a one story brick structure.

4. A two story brick residence.

5. The Henry Ziegler Residence, a two story brick house
   with hip roof.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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Shelby

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7.

BETHEL HISTORIC DISTRICT

6. The Mose Miller Residence, a two story brick building.
    The last house built in Bethel while it was still a
    communal society.

7. The Nicholas Will Tailor Shop and Residence, a two story
    frame house.

8. A two story frame dwelling.

9. A two story frame dwelling.

10. The John Bower Business District, a row of two story
    brick buildings now covered with tin facing.

11. The Bethel Communal Mens' Home, a two story brick struc-
    ture which also held the general store and was used as
    a Hotel.

12. A two story brick residence.

13. The Bauer Residence, a two story brick building with a
    later frame addition.

14. The Bauer Drug and Jewelry Shop, a two story frame
    building.

15. A one story brick dwelling with a later frame addition.

16. A two story brick house.

17. The Samuel Schriber Residence, a two story brick house
    with a later wood frame addition and porch. Mr. Schriber
    served as the colony's millwright.

18. A two story brick residence with mansard roof.

19. The original Bethel School; a large brick structure.

BETHEL HISTORIC DISTRICT

19. The Ziegler Colony House., a two story clapboard over brick building; in colony times Mr. Ziegler was one of the Bethel Blacksmiths.

20. A colony home, two story brick with later additions. Typical German house setting right at the edge of the sidewalk.

21. A Colony House and Smoke House, two story brick with central stairway, with later additions.

22. A Colony House, two story brick changed very little.

23. The Erich Colony House, a two story brick home with later addition.

24. A Colony House, a Two story clapboard over brick building.

25. A Colony House, two story clapboard over brick building.

26 A Colony House, two story clapboard over brick building.

houses not included in historic district.

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian   ☐ 16th Century   ☐ 18th Century   ☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century   ☐ 17th Century   ☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal   ☐ Education   ☐ Political   ☐ Urban Planning
  ☐ Prehistoric   ☐ Engineering   ☒ Religion/Phi-   ☐ Other (Specify)
  ☐ Historic   ☐ Industry   losophy
☐ Agriculture   ☐ Invention   ☐ Science
☐ Architecture   ☐ Landscape   ☐ Sculpture
☐ Art   Architecture ☐ Social/Human-
☐ Commerce   ☐ Literature   itarian
☐ Communications   ☐ Military   ☐ Theater
☐ Conservation   ☐ Music   ☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bethel Historic District has both historical and architectural
significance. Historically, Bethel was an important manifestation
of the mid-eighteenth century trend toward organizing communistic
societies and further, was the most successful communistic society
established in Missouri. Architecturally, the district is an
extant example of communal society buildings, constructed from
1844-1880.

The founder of Bethel was Dr. William Keil, a Protestant German
emigrant, who, believing in the moral value of communal living,
gathered together a group of followers, mainly poor and working-
class Germans, and purchased land for a commune in Shelby County,
Missouri in 1844. (William G. Bek, "From Bethel, Missouri, to
Aurora, Oregon, Letters of William Keil, 1855-1870," Missouri
Historical Review, 48:23, October 1953, and William G. Bek, "A
German Communistic Society in Missouri," Missouri Historical
Review, 3:52-3, October 1908, and Charles Nordhoff, The Communistic
Societies of the United States, 1875, reprint 1960, pp. 306-7.)
(Shelby County Deed Record, Book P, p. 48.)

Settlement began in 1844, and by 1847 the town of Bethel was a
thriving and prosperous village as described in a letter to the
Hannibal Gazette of 1847.

> On either side of the street leading up from the
> bridge, are the dwelling houses, situated at regular
> intervals, built of brick and nearly all of the same
> size. On the right ... a large hotel is in course of
> erection. About half a mile from the river (North
> River), a large church is being completed.

The writer also mentions such industries as a tannery, lumber mill,
flour mill and a carding and spinning establishment. "The colony
numbers about 600 souls and is in a prosperous condition, and on
best terms with all their neighbors." (Hannibal Gazette, October 7,
1847, p.2, col. 3.)

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8.

BETHEL HISTORIC DISTRICT

By 1854, Kiel believed the Bethel area was becoming too populated and he decided to begin another communal colony in the new territory of Oregon. Between 1854 and 1863, about 400 of the 650 people in Bethel in 1855, migrated west to Oregon and founded the settlement of Aurora. This caused a serious drain on the population and resources of the Bethel community. (Charles Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States, 1875, reprint 1960, p. 327.*)

By 1874-75, the Bethel community owned about 4,000 acres of land and 1300 acres in Adair County where a new settlement called Nineveh had been established in 1851. When Charles Nordhoff visited Bethel in 1874, the town had 200 members, and such buildings as a church, saw mill, grist mill, tannery, general store, drug store, shops for carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers, tinners, tailors, shoemakers, and hatters; as well as many fine brick homes. The town consisted of one main street running north and south; at the head of which was a hotel kept in the German way with beds in the large common room and meals in the kitchen. (Nordhoff, 1960, pp. 324-25.)

The government of both the Bethel and Aurora communities resided in the person of William Kiel. His powerful will, magnetic personality and autocratic leadership were the bonds unifying the two communities. (William G. Bek, "From Bethel, Missouri, To Aurora, Oregon, Letters of William Kiel, 1855-1870," *Missouri Historical Review*, 48: 25, October 1953.) His teachings became the basic tenets of the two societies.

1. The form of government should be parental like the parental nature of the government of God.

2. Societies should follow the model of the family; where all members work for the general welfare, share all interests and property in common and draw their livelihood from a common treasury.

3. Community applies only to property and labor as religion and the state of nature do not teach community in any other things. Marriage and family life is therefore retained.

4. To love one another is the basic truth of Christianity.

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8. (#2)

BETHEL HISTORIC DISTRICT

The community members read few books except the Bible, shunned most
religious ceremonies and prefered to rely on the advice of Kiel.
(Charles Nordhoff, The Communistic Societies of the United States,
1875, reprint 1960, pp. 309-329.) The "chief aim of his preaching
seems to have been to induce his followers to lead a moral life;
to assert his authority; to compel the members to be industrious
and thus foster the progress of the community." (William G. Bek,
"A German Communistic Society in Missouri," Missouri Historical
Review, 3: 69, October, 1908.)

Upon Kiel's death in 1877, the two colonies lost their unifying
force and dissension soon developed. Since no strong leader
appeared to manage and control the affairs of the colonies, and
since many of the young people became dissatisfied with the communal
way of life, it was decided to devide the property, first between
the two colonies and then between the respective members of each
colony. (Bek, "A German Communistic Society in Missouri," Missouri
Historical Review, 3: 69, October, 1908.) Bethel dissolved as a
community in 1880, followed by Aurora in 1881. (Ralph Albertson,
"A Survey of Mutualistic Communities in America," The Iowa Journal
of History and Politics, 34: 387, October, 1936.) However, many of
the members remained on their parcels of land and Bethel was soon
incorporated as a town in 1883.

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9.

BETHEL HISTORIC DISTRICT

4. Nordhoff, Charles. <u>The Communistic Societies of the United States.</u> New York: Hillary House Publishers, New York, 1961. First published in 1875.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Albertson, Ralph. "A Survey of Mutualistic Communities in America." *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, Vol. 34, October, 1936.

2. Bek, William Godfrey. "A German Communistic Society in Missouri." *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. III, October 1908.

3. Bek, William Godfrey. "From Bethel, Missouri, to Aurora, Oregon Letters of William Keil, 1855-1870." *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. 43, October, 1953.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY		OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES	
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW	39° 52' 48"	92° 01' 31"			
NE	39° 52' 46"	92° 01' 14"			
SE	39° 52' 31"	92° 01' 18"			
SW	39° 52' 32"	92° 01' 35"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 50

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Charla A. Piggott, Research Historian

ORGANIZATION Missouri State Park Board
State Historical Survey and Planning Office

DATE May 8, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER:

P.O. Box 176, 1204 Jefferson Building

CITY OR TOWN: Jefferson City

STATE Missouri

CODE 24

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒   State ☐   Local ☐

Name _____
Joseph Jaeger, Jr.

Title Director, Missouri State Park Board, and Missouri State Liaison Officer

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

_____
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
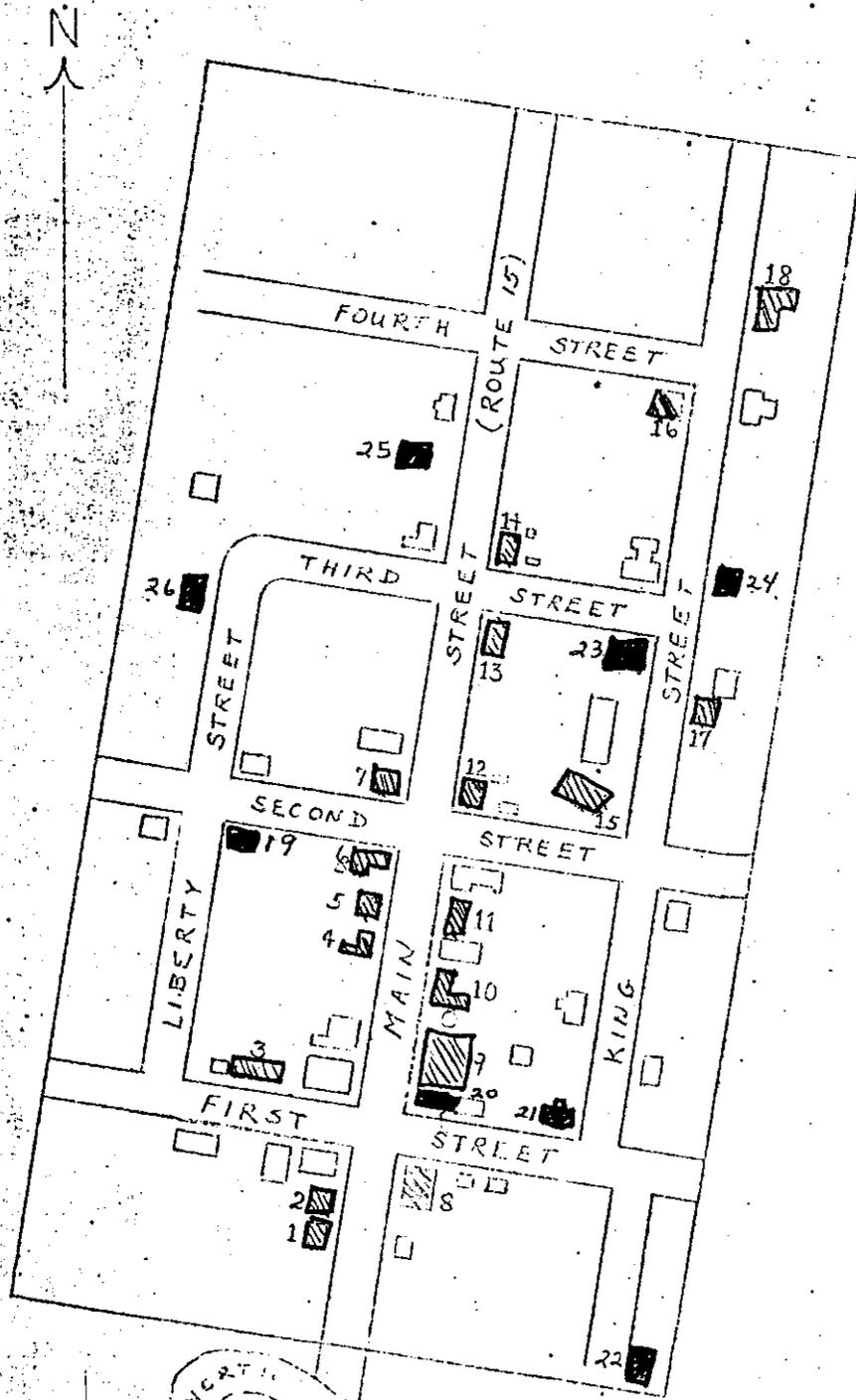
Date _____

ATTEST:

_____
Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

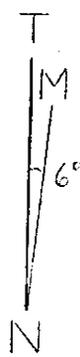SEE INSTRUCTIONS
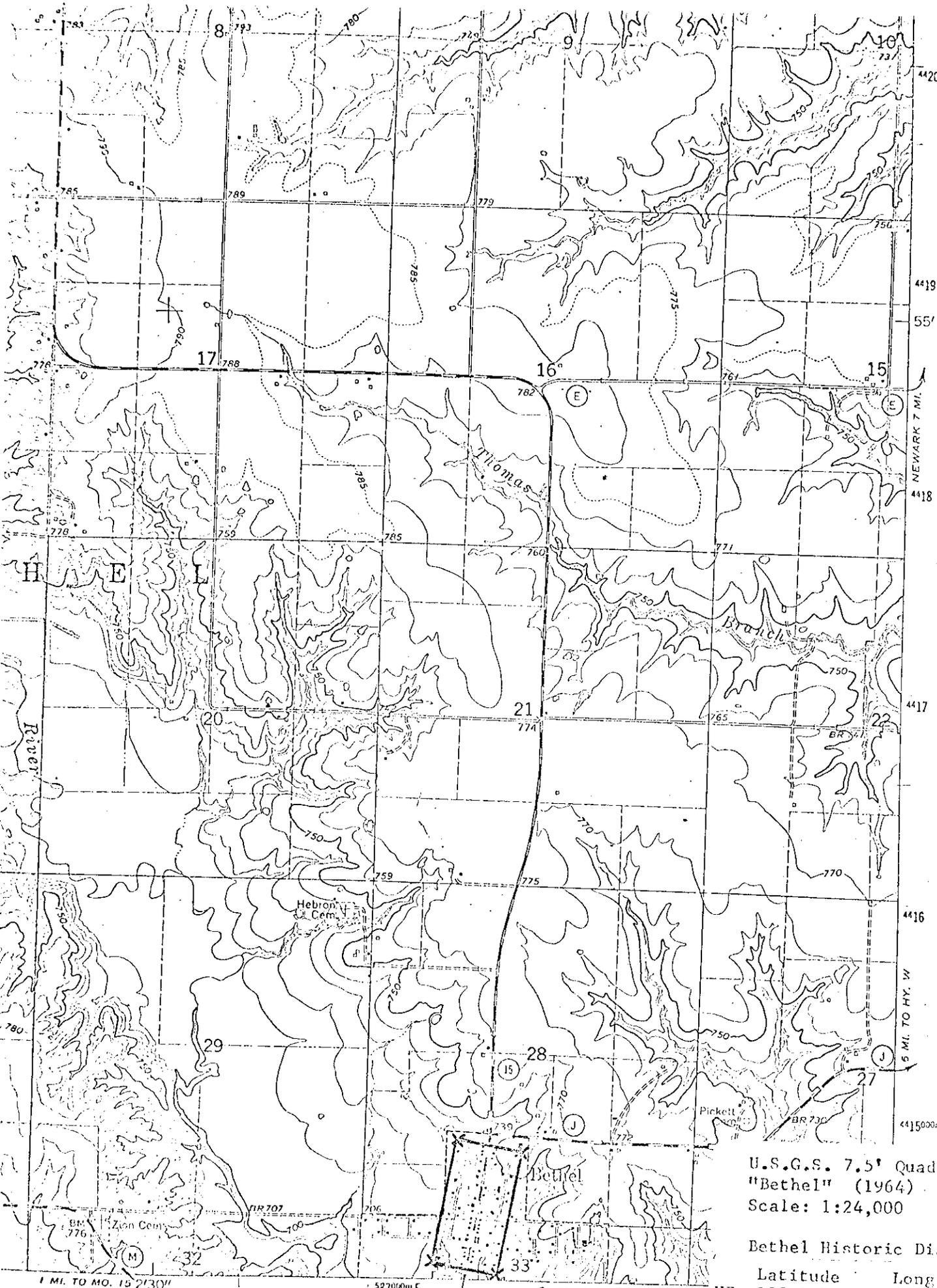
BETHEL HISTORIC DISTRICT

BETHEL, MO.

N

FOURTH STREET

(ROUTE 15)

18

16

25

THIRD STREET

STREET

STREET

26

STREET

11

B

G

24

13

23

17

12

15

SECOND STREET

19

6

5

4

11

LIBERTY

MAIN

10

KING

3

7

20

21

FIRST STREET

2

1

8

22

NORTH

NOT TO SCALE

SMH JULY 1970

COLONY BLDG.

RECENT

in original NRINF

shd be added to NRINF

U.S.G.S. 7.5' Quadrangle
"Bethel" (1964)
Scale: 1:24,000

Bethel Historic District

	Latitude			Longitude		
NE	39°	52'	50"	92°	01'	15"
SE	39°	52'	31"	92°	01'	20"
NW	39°	52'	53"	92°	01'	29"

ROAD CLASS

SHELBYVILLE 4.8 MI.
SHELBINA 12 MI.

1 MILE

1 MI. TO MO. 15 2'30"

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

Hebron Cem.

Zion Com.

Bethel

Pickett

Thomas

Branch

River

H E L

NEWARK 7 MI.

5 MI. TO HY. W

BETHEL HISTORIC DISTRICT
BETHEL, MO.

N

1,026'

FOURTH

STREET

(ROUTE 15)

1,930'

THIRD

STREET

STREET

SECOND

STREET

STREET

STREET

LIBERTY

MAIN

KING

FIRST

STREET

1,930'
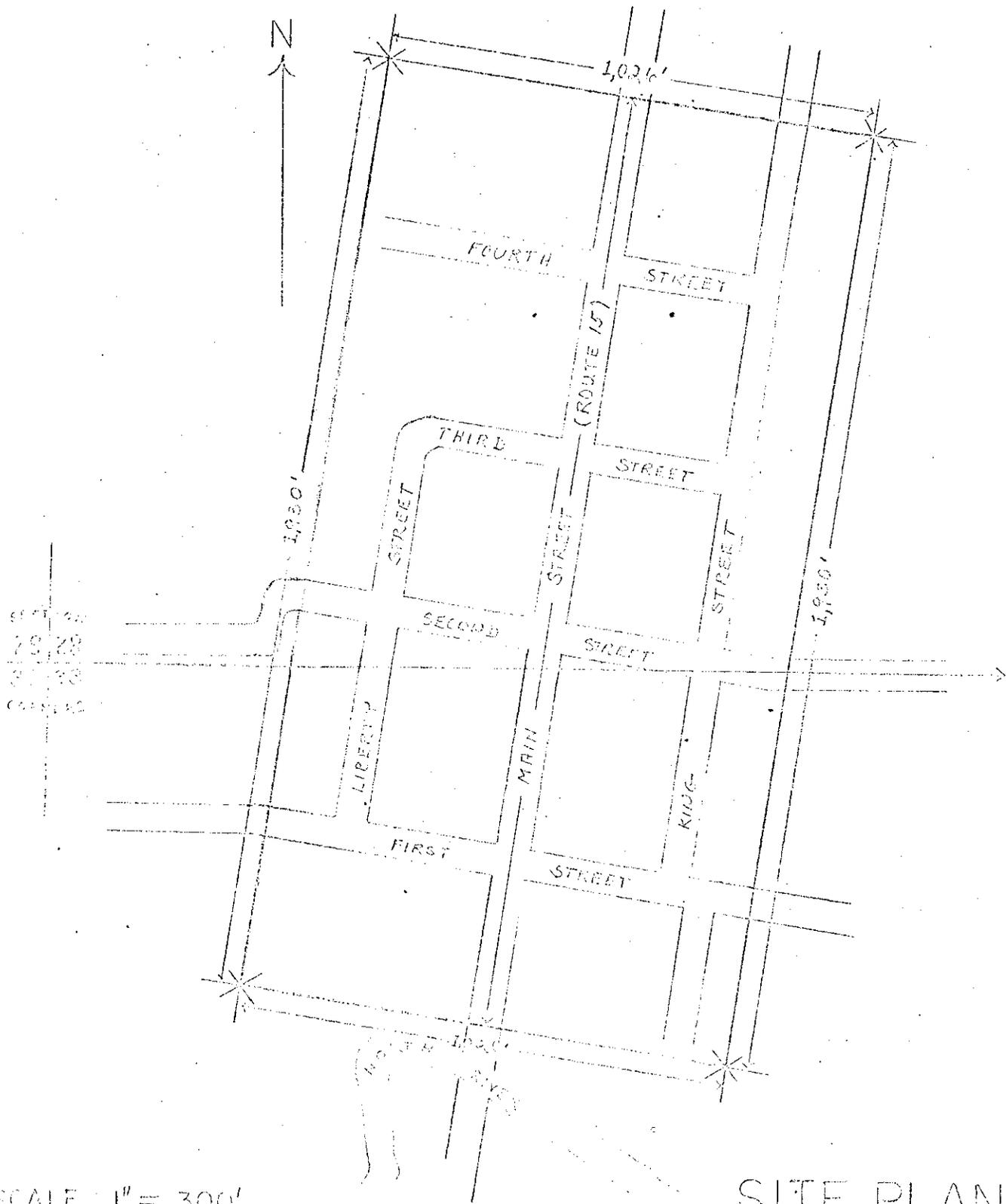
SCALE 1" = 300'

SITE PLAN MAP

BETHEL HISTORIC DISTRICT
BETHEL, MO.

N
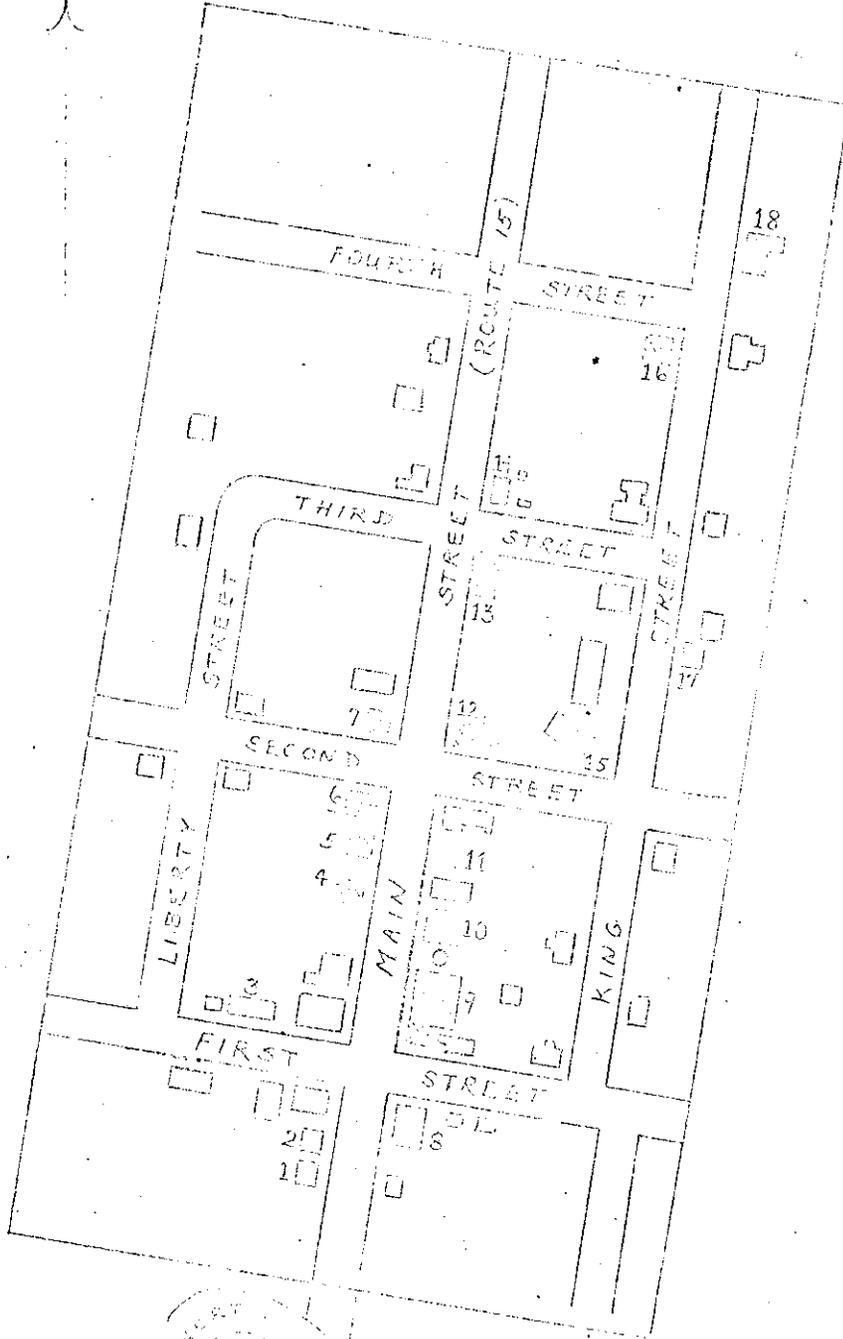
NOT TO SCALE

COLONY BLDG.
RECENT

DOCTOR WILLIAM KEIL AND HIS HOME IN BETHEL KNOWN AS "ELIM"